

Negro Youth Must Be Able to Find Something Better Than...

BY ROY WILKINS

The five bodies swung to and fro from a bridge over a small river. A mob in Shubuta, Miss., had staged a hanging lynching.

It has been 50 years or more since this mass hanging, but it is too fresh to forget—that is, for some American Negroes to forget. One would think that never would a people, hanged at Shubuta and elsewhere in the lynching era, permit themselves to be a part of a hanging.

And yet the new Negro youth, who fancy themselves emancipated, used a tree on the campus of Howard University in April, 1967, to stage a hanging. It is true that the three "victims" were effigies, straw men. One was the president of the university, an American Negro whose family grew up in what was once the leading lynching state of the entire union.

But it was a hanging, real in every sense except that the bodies dangled from the tree on a sunny

officials. For this the young black, would-be lynchers staged a mock hanging.

Today the white mob-mind provides itself with a "cover," however thin, if it plans a lynching. But, alarmingly, the mob-mind seems to have possessed some of the dark extremists. Student or youth rage is fanned to "tear things up" and to "take over," but upon what excuse?

Although blind black-ism is becoming a cult as arrogant as any white-ism, the excuse, on the surface, seems to be the childish but fiendish resentment of all authority. Racial epithets are used intra-racially with all the contempt and venom that white haters once employed.

But more frightening than this infantilism is the demonstration that the young black practitioners, who swagger and brag that they are declaring their independence of white people, are actually but copies of the worst of the whites.

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Instead of a fresh look and a new plan to minister to humanity's ills, too many young Negroes are bringing nothing but spleen and dogma and complete conformity, plus a throwback to the mind and the methods of long-ago Shubuta.

Their answer to hatred is not compassion, but more hatred. Their reaction to frustration, deprivation and delay is the hard, dirty word. The disciplines of organized society draw the hateful defiance of a rope and a tree limb.

Undeniably, choking disabilities do exist in greater or lesser degree, but older Negro citizens had a right to expect more than that the ancient enemies of their race, and of all mankind's progress toward liberty, would be reincarnated in an increasingly vocal segment of Negro youth.

Does the whole spirit-sapping, bone-wearying battle have to start all over again?



"We want to get our cause back"

Cartoon by Dowling

campus quadrangle were not the flesh and blood Shubuta bodies. The cries were there, as they were at Shubuta. The jeers were there, also. There were curses and rough talk, Shubuta style. There were women present as there had been at Shubuta. And the hatred was there, too, perhaps the saddest and most shameful aspect of the whole incredible affair.

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Whatever the provocation, it just does not seem possible that Negro American college students could so far forget the suffering and the murders of their people through lynching by hanging as to stage a mock lynching. One cannot imagine a band of Jewish youths using an oven to stage a ghastly prank. It hurts too much. It dredges up too much of the anguish of a whole people.

What was the crime which was deemed terrible enough to warrant this ripping open of a great racial scar? A rude, crude, disgraceful affront to a visiting speaker drew disciplinary action by university